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MEMOIR OF JOHN CHENEY

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN CHENEY

ENGRAVER

BOSTON
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TO THE CHENEY FAMILY.

This imperfect Tribute to one so honored and beloved is offered to you all, young and old, that we may keep the memory of "Uncle John" ever warm in our hearts, and that his example may hold us ever loyal to "the true, the beautiful, and the good."

EDNAH D. CHENEY.

Forest Hill Street,
October, 1888.

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MEMOIR

OF

JOHN CHENEY.

I.

EARLY LIFE.

JOHN CHENEY, the second son of George and Electa Cheney, of South Manchester, Conn., was born Oct. 20, 1801.[1] He went to school in his native town, and assisted in the work of the farm and mill when a boy. As he was one of the oldest of the children, but few anecdotes of his youth are now remembered; but an instance is told of the sturdy patience with which he endured an unjust punishment, showing the same moral independence and force of will which distinguished him in after years.

John was very fond of reading, and is remembered as always standing up in the corner of the room, by the tall old-fashioned secretary, with his hat on, when busily engaged in his book. He has been known to stand seven hours, first on one foot, then on the other, absorbed in reading. He appears to have been interested in drawing at an early age, and began to make experiments in engraving when he

[1] An account of his genealogy and of the life of the family during his early years may be found in the opening chapters of the Memoir of his brother, Seth W. Cheney.

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was about twenty years old. When confined by a lame foot he made drawings on the walls of his room, which are still preserved; they are full of promise. He studied engraving from an encyclopædia, and made a printing-press before he had ever seen an Engraver. He cut a piece from an old copper kettle and engraved on it a sketch of boys playing ball, to be used for a Reward of Merit. This plate still exists. He also made some prints for the South Schoolhouse. A sheet of eight pictures, — Rewards of Merit, — representing animals, is supposed to be his first published work.

John went to Hartford about the year 1820, and worked for Willard the engraver. He boarded with E. W. Bull. He considered this lost time, thinking that he learned nothing. In 1826 he was in Boston, working with Pendleton. Pendleton had been to France, and is said to have brought the lithographic process to Boston. All the artists drew for him. John's lithographs are small and few, and Mr. Crossman feels sure that when he was first introduced to him in 1826 he was engraving on steel. He was still in Boston in 1827 and 1828, and while writing to his father to borrow a little money for some new business projects he speaks of his prospects as "very good." The "Martha Washington" was engraved at the Boston Athenæum. About 1828 or 1829 he joined an art club established in Boston by a pupil of Leslie, Mr. J. K. Fisher, which met in a hall under the old Museum. The members met for improvement in drawing, but the club failed for want of funds.

John's father died July 19, 1829, and he must then have felt additional care for his mother and the young family, who were left with small resources besides the farm and their own energies. In 1829 he was in New York, and his brother Seth was with him, studying drawing and engraving.

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A few of his letters of this youthful period have been fortunately preserved. They show his earnestness in work, his tender care for his family, his strong love for his brother Seth, in whose talent he feels more pride than in his own, his bright observation of men and things, and even his care for health and respect for graham bread, — all traits of character which he preserved through life.[1]

BOSTON, Feb. 14, 1827.

DEAR FATHER, — I am about to make a new arrangement in business, by which I shall want a little more money than I possess. I had determined not to ask for more, and should not but for this change of situation, which I cannot enter upon with advantage without. Fifty dollars would answer for the present, and if I can make business thrive shall need no more.

I might have obtained it here, but did not wish to have the necessity known. If it should put you to any inconvenience to afford it, I should be very sorry. Perhaps you had better borrow it on my account; I shall be able to pay it before long. You can send it by mail or otherwise, as you choose. Mr. Thomas Mather is coming back soon; you may send by him.

So far I have got on tolerably well, though rather unsettled. My future prospect offers a greater, more pleasant and profitable concern.

I am pleased to hear of your improved health, and that all the family are well. That it may long continue, is the prayer of

Your son, JOHN.

BOSTON, March, 1828.
Thursday night.

DEAR FATHER, — I blame myself very much for not writing more (or not at all), to inquire about the health of the family, etc.; but it is a great task for me to write, and nothing but absolute necessity drives me to it. I heard by Uncle Wells the other day that you were not quite as well as when I was at home. I hope you

[1] I have not corrected the style of the letters in any respect; it is characteristic of the writer and the period.

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will not be worse. Have you your old complaints? I should like to hear a particular account; perhaps I might find some remedy. Don't you think if you should leave business and spend the summer at some pleasant sea-shore place it would be of great benefit?

I am well, and very much engaged in business. I have not decided whether to join Pendleton in New York yet. Gallaudet is coming here about the 1st of April, and that will be no small inducement for me to continue. Still, the prospect is so good I may possibly go; but I can't tell yet. I should like very much to hear how you all are at home. I wish I could engage some of the family to write to me often. Perhaps Seth would. Such a correspondence would be extremely pleasant to me, and perhaps of some use to him. If Seth chooses to learn to draw or engrave, I suppose I shall have a good situation for him by and by. I hope you or some one will write *soon*. I am anxious to hear of your health and Ma's. Is she as well as usual, — and Wells's family, etc., etc.?

Your affectionate son, JOHN.

BOSTON, Dec. 15, 1828.

DEAR MOTHER, — I thought to have been ready for Seth before. The principal reason is, Mr. Tisdale, who has been staying some time in our room, has not yet gone, and as he occupied the only spare window, it would have been inconvenient for him had he come before. Mr. T. will leave this week, so that by the time that Seth will get here he can be agreeably situated. I shall expect him some time this week, or the beginning of next at farthest. I requested Charles to write directing him where to stop, etc., in Providence, which I suppose he has done. The direction I gave Seth will be sufficient; there will not be the least difficulty in finding me.

I have not heard a word from home since I came. I suppose all are doing well. I should like to hear some particulars of Pa's health very much. I wish you, or some one, will write by Seth, if not before.

The dyspeptic bread is made by mixing wheat meal with water; the meal to be unbolted, *with all of the bran*, and water sufficient to mould it conveniently into cakes about as large

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as a small plate, and a little more than a quarter of an inch thick, so that it will bake dry and brittle, — otherwise it will be tough. Those I have seen are a little brown or burnt on the edge. If you don't succeed in making them, write for further instructions.

I wish Seth to get about a dollar's worth of blue mixed stocking-yarn and bring it; and I should like also if he would get three or four more pairs of those socks at Frederick's store, — not the largest size, — and I will pay for them.

Miss Mather requested me to inquire about some drawings. Mr. Pendleton has them, for eight dollars the whole set, and he does not choose to separate them. There are about fifty of them. I wish this may be communicated to her. My love to all.

Your son, JOHN.

My health is very good.

NEW YORK, March, 1829.
Saturday night.

DEAR FATHER, — I have at last brought myself to write. I should have done it before, but we have only just got regulated so as to give you a fair description of ourselves, — I suppose you have received the papers that I sent, — besides, the weather has been so very bad ever since we left home, that it seemed to keep everything out of order. Both of us caught a very bad cold immediately after we got here, which has but just gone off. It is now quite pleasant and agreeable. We have a room in the Exchange, — a back room, so that we are quite out of hearing of the noise; almost as much so as if we were at home. We board at a private house. Henry Doane, whom I knew in Boston, is at the same place. It is a very good house indeed. We pay a little more than three dollars a week for board and lodging. I found it would cost about the same to sleep in our room, considering the expense of a mattress, etc.

Seth is making considerable progress with his drawing. I could find no teacher for him, so am instructing him myself, and I believe it will be about as well. He has not attempted to engrave much yet, but he draws so well that I think there is no doubt of his success.

For myself, I have got nothing to say. Since I have got rid of my cold I have been very well; we are both of us in very good

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health. The weather has been so that we have not been about much. Seth is well pleased with what he has done, and perfectly contented, — not homesick at all.

I am very desirous to hear how your health is now. The very cold weather that we have had must have been very disagreeable for you; I think you must wish for the warm weather of spring with a great deal of pleasure, — as much as I do, I hope.

When does Mr. Bunce come here? I should like to have him call. Our room is No. 42 in the Exchange.

I wish some one to write as soon as convenient. I want to hear how you all are very much, and hope I shall soon. My love for all.

Affectionately your son, JOHN.

NEW YORK, April, 1829.
Tuesday evening.

DEAR MOTHER, — I intended to have sent a letter by Mr. Hyde, — I had written one for the purpose, but Seth mistook the steamboat, — by Mr. Bunce too, but did not see him but once, a few minutes.

I must write now, however, as Seth goes on Thursday in the steamboat for Hartford; so if you get this in season it will be well perhaps for some one to meet him at the boat, which arrives the next day — Friday — about eleven o'clock. I think it unnecessary that he should be at the expense of staying here any longer at this time, and it will be some time before he will be able to earn much, though I think he has made great progress, — all that could be expected. He seems capable of doing what he chooses, and there is no doubt but that in due time he will be very successful. I should like to have him stay until I went, which will be soon; but I think on the whole he had better go now. He has learned the principles of drawing and engraving well enough to enable him to practise without instruction, — at least for a short time. I even think it will be better for him, now that he has got the means of proceeding, to be alone and obliged to continue for himself. I may possibly stop in Hartford myself during the summer; I think some of it. I have not decided, however.

I have been somewhat disappointed in the principal object for which I came. The Academy closed sooner than usual, so that I

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got but little instruction from them. I have gained other advantages, though, sufficient to pay me for coming, and altogether am not sorry.

By what I hear of father's health I conclude he is about the same as when I was at home. Considering the very cold weather that has been, it is not strange that he is no better, nor even if he were worse. I must still hope that he will be much better when the warm weather commences. I am glad to hear that your health continues so good.

New York is a tremendous place. They carry everything to extremes, whether it is business or pleasure. They are now running wild with masquerades; there is one almost every night, and sometimes two or three. I have been to one. There were about two thousand persons present, three fourths of whom were masked, besides a great number and variety of fancy dresses in all sorts of characters. It was, on the whole, a very amusing scene. Good-night.

Yours affectionately, JOHN.

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II.

LIFE IN EUROPE.

MR. CHENEY was anxious for further instruction in his work, although he was already recognized as skilful in his art, and employed by the leading publishers of Philadelphia, Messrs. Carey & Lea. He was enabled to gratify his desire to visit England by the kindness of a merchant in Providence, Mr. Joseph Howard, who advanced him money to defray his expenses. This generous interest in artists on the part of business men is frequently met with in the history of American art. It is difficult to ascertain the dates of this journey. He appears to have sailed from New York in the "Caledonia," June 1, 1830; but he remembered entering Paris during the Revolution of July, 1830. There is no other proof that he went to Paris at this time, but rather that he remained in London for a year or two. A letter is addressed to him at No. 8 Buckingham Place, Fitzroy Square, London, as late as June 16, 1832.

Mr. Allston gave Mr. Cheney a letter of introduction to the painter Charles Leslie, in which he speaks with great interest of his early promise in art. He appears not to have delivered it; but a note from Leslie shows that the acquaintance had been made in some way. Leslie superintended the engraving from some of his pictures.

CAMBRIDGEPORT, Dec. 14, 1830.

DEAR LESLIE,—This will be handed to you by Mr. Cheney, whom I have particular pleasure in making known to you. Mr. C. is

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a native of Connecticut, and I believe from the same place with Mr. Danforth, who has done himself so much credit by his engraving from your portrait of Sir Walter Scott.

Though the specimens which Mr. Cheney will show you of his engraving will no doubt afford the best evidence of his genius, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of adding my opinion. To me he appears to possess all the essential qualities of a first-rate engraver; and that such he will become, with a little more experience and the many advantages for study which London affords, I entertain not the smallest doubt. His prominent quality, one that I am sure you will agree with me is of the highest order, is his delicate *tact* for expression and character. This, we both know, is as rare among engravers as with painters; but Mr. Cheney adds to this a clearness and grace of line that already entitle him to a decided rank.

As a disinterested lover of the art, I rejoice that he is now in a school so well fitted for the development of his powers; but for this I would regret his leaving America, as I had hoped at no distant day to put them (if agreeable to him) in requisition for myself. As it is, however, I shall not give up the hope of one day or other availing myself of his graver.

After what I have said, it would be quite superfluous to ask your friendly offices in his behalf. I would only add that they would be very gratefully received.

By the time this reaches you, or probably soon after, you will receive an answer to your last. In the mean time I beg you to accept my thanks for it, and to believe me ever sincerely yours,

WA. ALLSTON.

CHARLES R. LESLIE, ESQ., R. A.
Mr. CHENEY, London.

This letter was probably never delivered, Mr. Cheney having made the acquaintance of Mr. Leslie otherwise; but those who know in what estimation Allston was held by the younger artists of his time can imagine the glow of heart with which the young Connecticut engraver received this warm and delicate appreciation, and how, even in old age, he loved to read over the lines which had given him fresh hope and courage in his youth.

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Mr. Cheney always referred to his residence in England with great pleasure. He must have had acquaintance with other English artists and engravers. Among English engravers he valued highly Sharp and Woollett. He also visited the poet Rogers, at whose house he met Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Newton. He engraved subjects from the National Gallery. He gained much from all these sources. His own simple and broad methods of work are well described in a letter to his brother, dated Nov. 28, 1830.[1]

LONDON, Sept. 23, 1831.

DEAR BROTHER, — The things I mentioned in my last have not gone as soon as I expected. When you receive this you will know that they have arrived. The little balls of etching ground are good, — the smallest perhaps the best; the other is common. You said in your letter you found it difficult to bite in on steel. I find no difficulty in making the ground hold at first, and as for rebiting, it is not well to do it much on steel, at least not much at once, and never without the ground is well laid. Upon steel it adheres the best when the plate is not too hot, just enough to work.

Sunday Night. I don't know but I mentioned in my last that I had been to see the woman who was Sharp's housekeeper. She has all or nearly all of his works, some that I had never before seen. I bought a few. There are two or three which I should like to send to you, but she had no duplicates. If I can meet with them anywhere else, I will. I send three prints, two of which you may let Van Pelton have, towards what I owe him, if he chooses, — "The Landing of King Charles," and the head of the "Prince of Wales," — the "Lear," from West, you may keep yourself. It is considered one of Sharp's best. The impression I send is not quite a finished one. As you see, it has considerable touching upon it. Pelton may have the two for five dollars, — what I gave; they are fine impressions. No engraver has equalled Sharp. There is such a beautiful variety in his work, — not too much mechanical system, which is so conspicuous in many others, such as Wille and Berwic. Nothing can be better than Sharp's hair, flesh, and drapery. His design

[1] See Memoir of S. W. Cheney, p. 14.

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seemed to be to represent the true effect of the object, which is the only good way. I believe it wrong to study prints very much; only look at them to see how any certain effect can be best and easiest produced. The gravers I send you are nearly an inch too long; break them off.

Don't use a magnifying-glass of too short focus; three inches, I think, is short enough. A more powerful one is very injurious to the eyes. I believe it is one great cause of the defect in mine; besides, I am sure that one cannot work near as well; you do too much. Mention this to Gallaudet. He is in the habit, I believe, of using a very strong one.

I forgot to mention before that Waitstill sent me an impression of your moonlight plate which I was very much pleased with. You have got along extremely well. Take care of your health. I send some little books for the children, which you can send to them when you have an opportunity. You will probably be in Boston when this comes. I desire you will remember me to all friends, — to Dr. Doane and to Mrs. Wells. Tell Miss Caroline that I will attend to her request with great pleasure.

I was in Kensington Garden this afternoon and picked some holly-leaves, which I will send with these, and will get some others the first opportunity.

I suppose you have enjoyed a pleasant summer at home. Charles and his folks have been there, I hope. I have not heard from them for some time. I wrote just before I received their last, and must again as soon as I can think of anything. I have not quite done the thing from Leslie yet. You may say to Goodrich that if he would like to have the plate I commenced for him, he can if he will let me know. He has never yet paid me the remainder of the price for the other. Besides what I owe him, there is about fifty dollars due. He may pay it to you if you choose to ask him. However, I think I had best to write to him immediately. I advise you to be pretty close with him; he is not any too generous.

I can think of nothing more. Don't fail to write. I would send you some prints for subjects to engrave, but it is very difficult to find good ones.

I wrote to Gallaudet the other day. Direct to Manchester. Good-night.

JOHN.

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Mr. Cheney went to Paris certainly as early as Jan. 15, 1833, as shown by his letters. March 15, he writes to his brother Seth to join him there, as he intends to stay all summer. Seth did join him there, and they had great delight in working together. They continued to engrave for Philadelphia and Boston publishers, and it was not easy to distinguish the work of one brother from that of the other.[1]

He was fond of Paris and of the French language, as is shown by his letters. He never lost his love for France, but was interested in the people, and in her political changes. He studied for a time with Isabey the painter, and was also a fellow-student with his brother in Delaroche's atelier. Among his warmest friends in Paris was the miniature-painter M. Dubourjal, with whom he boarded, and for whom he cherished a lifelong affection.

The following letters from Paris show the fresh delight of the young man in his art and in all the novel scenes opening to him, as well as his constant love of home and deep interest in his family.

PARIS, Jan. 15, 1833.

DEAR MOTHER, — . . . At first, not knowing the language, I seemed to be shut out from everybody and everything; but strong necessity made me soon learn some of the most necessary words, so that I could ask for things that I was most in need of. Still, I understand little or nothing that people are talking about, though I can make out tolerably well when I read. I have a great desire to know the French language, and am determined to learn it. And being here, with a little instruction, I think that I shall soon become master of it. I find very great facilities here to study my own profession, — much more than I expected. Had I known this before, I should not have stayed so long in London; and, what is of great consequence, it costs but little more than half as much to

[1] See Memoir of S. W. Cheney, p. 18.

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live, and in every respect I think it a much more agreeable place. The people I see about seem to be much better off than in England. I scarcely ever see a beggar, and this is one very great relief. The weather, though it is as cold and cloudy, yet the air is always clear, — a good deal like our own climate. As for the French people, as I cannot talk with them I don't know what to say of them. I can only use my eyes, and as far as I can judge from them they seem to be a singular people, — very different from other nations. I heard many things against them before I came here, and since, some of the Americans, and others who speak English, that I have met here, have endeavored to prejudice me against them. It is not strange that people with peculiar habits and customs should find those habits clash with those of another nation that has also its peculiarities. But what right have they to complain? The French have the same right to their customs as we have to ours. They appear to me not to act from [different] motives than others, and therefore they are as good.

I have for about a month attended every evening at an Academy for drawing from the life. This is a most excellent place; in London I could find nothing of the kind convenient. Here there is every facility in the way of art. When I left London I was a good deal discouraged; but since I came here I have a new start, and think that I shall make some improvement.

At the Academy I have made the acquaintance of a young man with whom I am much pleased. He is of great use as well as pleasure to me. He is from Holland, but speaks English. There is also a young American painter who lodges in the same house with me. I engrave during the day and draw in the evening. When I get some knowledge of the language, I expect to get along very well. I have an opportunity to engrave something for a French work, and think that I shall do so. My health is quite good. When I think of the advantages here, I cannot help wishing sometimes that Seth had the opportunity to improve them; but perhaps this cannot be. Still, if he has a very great desire to do so, I think it would be well for him. You may think from my mentioning this that I do not intend to return as soon as I proposed; but it is not so. I still think that I shall go home in the spring, —

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only if he should come here I should stay a little longer to assist him. . . .

Your affectionate son, JOHN.

PARIS, March 15, 1833.

DEAR BROTHER, — . . . Why did not Seth write at the same time with you? I have not heard from him this long time. I should like to hear from him and know how he is getting on. I wish that he could come here a short time. Six months here would be of the greatest use to him; besides the expense of passage it would not cost much, as he could live here even cheaper than he could in Boston. What do you think of it? I have now concluded to remain during the summer. He might come, and return with me in the fall, or if he chose he could remain a little longer; but perhaps I am doing wrong, — I will say no more of it. I think that I have concluded to stay longer for very good reasons, — I find so good advantages here, and everything at so little expense. This, however, would not be of any use if I did not feel life improving, which I do at present, very much. I am also much interested to learn the French language. I have not yet made very much progress, though I have studied it considerable, but I have not practised much in speaking. I find it no easy matter to learn a new language, but I am determined to do it. I have the opportunity of benefiting by the acquaintance of some of the best artists here if I could speak French, which I hope that I soon shall. One of them who speaks English has shown me great attention, which, considering that I know not the language, has been of the greatest service. Now that I think of it, if Seth or anybody else wants to learn the French, I advise him to get Cobbett's French Grammar. I believe all except the pronunciation can be learned from it without a teacher.

I ought to be able to tell you something about the people, but believe that I cannot much *more*, *especially* as I do not understand much that is said. Some things struck me at first as being singular, but I do not mind it now. They certainly are singular compared to the English. Society is founded on a better principle, — classes are not so distinct; there is more equality, which to a republican must always be agreeable.

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I intended to have written more, but an acquaintance has called and interrupted me, and I must send this to-day or not at all. So good-by, and I will write again soon, — a long one.

My health is very good indeed. My love for all.

JOHN.

PARIS, March 28, 1834.

DEAR ——, — I don't know which particular one to write to, so it shall be to all together. We did not get your last letter until to-day, although it has been in Paris about a month. I believe it was mislaid and not sent to us. I am very sorry, for we have been a long time anxious, and wondering why we did not hear, as you promised to write again soon after your last, which we received "sur le champ." We have been talking every day of writing again, but put off, saying we should certainly have another letter soon, and then we shall have a greater motive for writing. You think, probably, that being in a place like this is sufficient to make one write a letter every day. It may be so with everybody else, but I do not find it so with me. I am not often enough moved to write but when I hear from somebody at home, and then I blame myself much for not doing it oftener; and then I find too many things to be said to say well. Nobody could be more gratified than we have been in reading your letter. It seems as though we had seen and talked with you. Seth and I have spent the evening talking about the different members of the family. Seth has a good many little histories to tell of what has happened since I was at home, which interests me extremely, and makes me long to be there again. I have thought all winter that I should go perhaps the first of April; but there are many reasons now why I cannot so soon; principally because I have just commenced drawing in the atelier of one of the best painters here [probably Delaroche], and I am so much interested and learning so much that I must go there another month; at least, I shall be sorry if I don't. I am working now with more determination than I ever have before. I have lost a good deal of time, I think, since I have been abroad; I have not endeavored enough to get instruction from the wise ones in our pursuit. Seth has also been studying with a painter here, and the two or three weeks that he was there he made

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most astonishing progress; they were surprised. But he worked too hard; he made himself sick. He would go in, set himself down, and work all day without scarcely moving, — forget himself entirely. He was never in better health than he was all the winter before, and he will no doubt be so again very soon, only he will have to rest a few days. And the weather will soon be very fine; it has been so all the winter: as the French say, "Temps superb — magnific," — not a particle of snow, and it has scarcely froze all winter.

I must leave the rest of this sheet for Seth. My health is very good indeed. I cannot express how much pleasure I feel to know that you are all so well. I believe I said in the last that I would write a letter to Waitstill in French, but I have not done it yet. I suppose she will go to Manchester in the summer again. I am very glad to hear that mother is so well. Grandfather and mother, she says, are in good health. I shall find everybody alive and well.

PARIS.

Since we wrote last we have received your letters, which has made us very glad, especially as we did not much expect to hear, as we had written that we should go home. We are extremely happy to hear that all are so well, but very sorry that mother is so much concerned for Seth. But from the letters which you have received since we first wrote that he was sick, she must be relieved from her anxiety, — at least a great part of it. At present there is no reason at all to be particularly concerned for his health, for there is no doubt that he will get quite well again if he takes care of himself and does not work too hard, which he will take good care not to do. He cannot study so hard yet as he would like, and he thinks sometimes that it would be better for him to go home and get thoroughly well, and then if he should think it worth while to come here again he could do so. And if he does not find himself more robust at the end of the summer, he says he may do so with me; but as it is doubtful, don't let it prevent you from writing. I don't know as I have anything worth mentioning at this time.

This is a great day in Paris, and there are some famous amusements to be seen. There is to be a balloon, — the largest that was

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ever made. They say that fourteen people will go up in it. Then there will be fireworks, illuminations of all the public places, — the Tuileries and the Champs Elysée especially, — and a great concert of music in the garden of the Tuileries, etc. We shall try to see them all.

Are you all really going to farming? I think you would do very well, but I doubt if you will like it as well as you expect. It is very fine in appearance, but it is hard for those who have not been used to it. Still, farmers in America are the happiest people in the world. When Seth read your letter he was ready to start off immediately and go to farming with you. He could go to it again without being disappointed, as he knows from experience what it is; and so could I, I think, and may sometime or other. Good-by.

JOHN.

I cannot refrain from introducing here a letter from one of Mr. Cheney's warmest and truest friends, the well-known engraver John de Mare.[1] I give it with the quaint spelling and broken English, as it is written: —

21 RUE ST. LAZARE, PARIS, 16 March, 1833.

DEAR FRIEND CHENEY, — I have no doubt you will have interpreted my last letter as a friend rather than as if my answer had been but guided by mere interest. I allude to my leaving Europe for America. I love you, my dear Cheney, as an old friend, as one of the few with whom I sympatized feelings to a great extent. it is my family, the habit of hearing oftens of some of my old relations, and the wish of remaining eye-witness of the progres of the Duch, English, and french Schools of art, that make me remain in this climate till our amatours will refuse encouragement. I say if business slackens here with the appearans of any duration, you then will see me fly over to Boston; but I cannot get from me to make a pleasure excursion of so long a traject. I am actually, my

[1] Jan de Mare was born at Amsterdam, Oct. 28, 1806; studied with Velijn; received a first prize in 1829, and upon the pension which it brought him went to Paris, where he had instruction from Ingres. In 1831 he went to London, and again to Paris; in 1840 to the Hague; in 1853 once more to Paris.

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dear Cheney, the happiest of man; by what, you will ask me. I will not keep you long in suspens. I am married this forthnight to Miss Marie Antoinette de Milhau, who is born in Baltimore of French parents, emigrated to your country for their attachment to the old branch of the Bourbons; my wife came back in France at the age of four, with her widowed mother and seven brothers and sisters — one sister married to Mr. Sue, a rich fisician, and after ten years marriage was a widow; married again with Mr. Niles, an American Secretary of Embassy, who is at present for your government Chargé d'affaire at Vienna; an other sister was married to Mr. Langlé, a french gentleman of large property; a third sister to the Marquis de Vernon, who lives on his lands in the Pyrenees; and a younger sister, yet unmarried, lives with her mother; the eldest Brother lives in New York, Broadway. John de Milhau is doing good business in medicine trade; an other brother travels in America, and a third was killed few years ago in duel at New Orleans. My wife is twenty-six years of age, of a small sise, with a pretty but expressive face, round and perfect female form, good-hearted, and very delicate feelings and taste. loves the arts, though she dus not cultivate them, sings charmingly, and reasons with much good sense. I am happy, perfectly; so, my dear friend, after my isolated life of four years do I find myself at ones and as by enchantment surrounded by a large and well-united family of the most distinguished society of our clas. Mr. Moreau thanks you for your having remembered him, and has charged me with his compliments back. My friend Van de Velde is at Venise, and intends returning to Holland this summer. I hear nothing of Mr. Dubourjal, as that he made last year many portraits in London. the exhibition is this year very poor, therefore allow me to pass it for this time in solemn silence. how is Mr. Eddy? I now he arrived safe at Boston, for he ordered plates since his return to my platemaker. give him my respects, if you please, but remember me particularly to your Brother, who I should be very glad to see. is it true that trade goes still bad in the United States? the papers here are every day full of that. do come over, I beg of you, if it goes worse; you shall meet with a brotherly reception at your most devoted and hearteliest friend,

JOH: DE MARE.

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Pray write me within the shortest delay, and tell me much about you. forgive my own shortness. you easily may understand that this my new régime takes me a great deal of time before I will be accustomed to it. good-bye.

JOHN CHENEY, ESQUIRE, *celebrated line engraver,*
at Boston, United States America.

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III.

WORK AT HOME.

MR. CHENEY was in Boston, after his return from Europe, probably from 1834 to 1837. A letter from there, dated March, 1835, shows that he and Seth were both there; and another to Mr. Carey, of Philadelphia, dated Nov. 15, 1837, speaks of his being then engaged on a plate for that publisher.

MANCHESTER, Nov. 29, 1837.
Thanksgiving.

DEAR BROTHER, — We have just received a copy of your letter by the "B—— Queen," from Burlington, and you may depend it is a most acceptable Thanksgiving present. We had gotten out of all patience, and had made up our minds that something had happened to you; and just as our imaginations had conjured up the worst, here comes the news that you were never so well, or enjoyed yourself so much. It is delightful. I was on the point of going to church to give thanks, but concluded to sit down and write to you instead.

I am very glad that you are not coming home, especially this winter; not of course because I don't want to see you, but because it would be a great pity to have such rational enjoyment nipped in the bud. I have regretted it more since I read your letter from Geneva. You seemed then to be in such a good train. I'll say no more of it, except that I could not be more pleased than I am with your letter. I hope you will stay until you have drank your fill.

I have been here about a month. I was tired of engraving, so came here to stay a short time, but have stayed a long one; but I

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have been busy tinkering things about the house so as to make mother comfortable for the winter. I shall go to Philadelphia in a day or two, and go to work for the winter. They will, of course, write you from Burlington, and tell you all the news. Mother and Electa will put a word into this, I hope. I shall leave a place for them. Mother's health seems to be very good. I think, on the whole, that she is better than she used to be.

BOSTON, Dec. 31, 1837.

DEAR MOTHER, — I have just received a letter from Seth, the first I have heard from him since he went to Burlington [N. J.]. He writes me in very good spirits indeed; says he is quite well and enjoys himself very much. I am delighted to hear it, for I did not believe he would get well so soon, especially in the winter. I think he has done well to go to B.; the climate is a good deal milder there, probably as much so as at the West, and perhaps more. He tells me that Electa is there too; I am very glad that she is with him. He says she is learning music. Ward and his wife are on there also, and Rush at the West. Frank, I hear, is at home, otherwise you would be pretty well deserted; as it is, I should think you might be lonely, but Ralph and Jerusha, I suppose, see you often. I hope you take good care of your health; I think the most important thing for you is to avoid all extremes of heat and cold. I suppose you have cased yourself well in flannel; and it is well always to keep the feet warm if possible, and when it is very cold to avoid going out much. Go out so much the more when it is warm. Lungs that are not strong are injured by breathing very cold air, especially on going out of a warm place. Endeavor to keep always comfortably warm, either by clothing, fire, or exercise, or all together. And, by the way, I hope you eat a little meat every day. I am inclined to think it will be much better for you. Since I returned from the West I have continued to use a small quantity, and think I am better for it. At all events, I believe your health would be improved by using it, and if you are not already in the habit, I hope you will try it.

Seth says he has heard from Rush that he had been sick but had recovered. When is he coming home; or does he intend to remain all winter? If you have any letter from them, just send it to me,

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if you please. I shall write soon. I shall go to Philadelphia in about a month or so.

Let me hear from you; I want to know how you are. Tell Frank to write me; I want to know how his affairs get on. My health is very good.

It is very nearly tea-time, and I may as well wish you all a happy New Year.

Your affectionate son, JOHN.

In January, 1840, Mr. Cheney writes from Philadelphia, sending twenty-five dollars to his mother. His engravings, with the exception of the Allstons, were all of small size, and it is matter of great regret that he did not have more important subjects on which to exercise his skill. In the dearth of paintings he often reproduced English or French engravings. His work was mostly for the Annuals, as they were then called. These were elegant books of prose and poetry, called the "Souvenir," "Gift," "Token," etc., with the best illustrations attainable. He worked on these for publishers both in Boston and Philadelphia. In Boston he made some lithographs for Pendleton, and also worked with Mr. Gallaudet, for whom both brothers seem to have felt great affection and sympathy, inviting him to their country home during his long illness. John very generously supplied his pecuniary needs to a large amount.

PHILADELPHIA, January, 1840.

DEAR MOTHER, — I send enclosed twenty-five dollars, which I can spare as well as not, also the letter from Seth, written a long time ago, but only just now come to hand. There is another one here which came a few days ago. He was on the point of starting for Rome, in good health as ever. We expect one by the "B—— Queen," and will send them both on to you together. I would send the last one to you now, but I want to copy it for Charles. I had a letter from him and Wait the other day. They seemed to be very well and contented. They want to hear something of Seth; said they had not had any news of him since the letter from Geneva,

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which Electa copied and sent them. I wish Electa would copy this one for them; as it was written directly after that one they have seen, it will come just right. Copy all of the first sheet, and commence the other at the place I have marked, beginning with, "I wish that I could give you some information," etc., — except, perhaps, a little bit I have marked on the other side addressed to James; leave that out too. I hope you will do it immediately, and send it on. You can get it all on to a foolscap sheet, I think. I would do it myself, but have not time.

How do you get on at home? I have scarcely heard anything since I was there. I hope you are not quite frozen up this cold weather. Seems to me this may be called a hard winter, and I see it has been much colder down East than here. Let me hear how you are. I ought to write oftener, but I have a great deal to do in a short time, and so I neglect everything else. I am sorry I was not able to send you some money before, but I could not any until the other day. I would send you more now if the exchange did not cost so much. However, if you want any more immediately, let me know, and you shall have it. I don't go very often to Burlington, nor do I hear as often as I used to. They have not yet succeeded as they wish in making sugar. I am sorry they have such bad luck. They don't mean to give it up yet, though, and I think they will succeed in the end.

MANCHESTER, Aug. 28 [1843].

DEAR SEP, — We received your letter by the steamer of the 1st August, about the middle of the month, and we are very glad to know that you are well and enjoying yourself so much.

I came home about a week ago, got your letter the day after. Found all well except Mother, she had one of her turns of cholera morbus; but she was getting better, and is now quite recovered again. Said she had been uncommon well this summer before.

They are getting on well with the silk factory. When I first came they were worrying a good deal about the coloring; but since, the dyer has succeeded in doing so well that they are quite satisfied, and expect no more trouble. Frank says they will grow fat again now. A trader in New York has engaged them to make one hundred and fifty pounds a week. They only manufacture it for a certain price, so there is no risk.

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I wrote to you about the 20th July by Mr. Humphrys, the engraver, who was returning to London, but he will not have arrived, I suppose, before you leave. I am sorry now that I did not write by one of the steamers that have sailed since you left. I certainly should if I had thought you would not remain longer in London. Mother has not received the letter you say you wrote from Portsmouth. The packet has not arrived. By the way, when the steamer before the last arrived, they reported that the ship in which you sailed had arrived in fifteen or sixteen days, and I expected we should hear from you, as the steamer sailed a few days after. I expected to find a letter from you when I got home here, but it seems to have been a mistake.

I am glad you were in time to see the Exhibition. The picture you were so well pleased with, by Eastlake, is painted for Mr. Carey; he was expecting to receive it every day. I think you have done well to go to Italy again, especially as you have such good company to go with. I have no doubt it will be the greatest advantage to you, only take care to improve the physical as well as the mental; make up your mind to stay as long as you please, so that you can take it more quietly.

I don't know how long I shall stay at home, neither have I quite concluded if I shall stay in Boston next winter; I shall decide when I get there. If I should not stop there, of course I should see that your things are well stored and taken care of.

I have not heard anything very certain of Mr. Allston's great picture, except that it will be exhibited soon. I shall find out about it when I get to Boston, and will write further.

I can't think of anything more to say now. Mother says she will write when she gets your letter.

They heard from Charles here a week or two ago; he was very well. Oh, I like to have forgot to say that I shall be delighted to see Dubourjal, and will do all I can to assist him. I hope we shall hear from you by every steamship at least, and we will try to let you know how we are here as often as possible. When you write me in future you may direct to Boston, and if I happen to leave there I will have somebody send them to me. Good-by.

JOHN.

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Dubourjal was a miniature-painter, and a most delightful companion. He remained but a short time in this country. He painted very fine miniatures of the two brothers. One of the late Dr. John D. Fisher is the only other specimen of his work known to me, except a lovely one of Mrs. Botta.

BOSTON, Sept. 30 [1843].

DEAR SEP, — I have been here about two weeks; came just before your last letter, though not in time to write you by the last steamer that sailed, as I intended to have done. I wrote you by the steamer of the 1st September, from home. After that, Mother and Visa, wishing to have the benefit of sea air, etc., went to a very good place near New London. I went with them, and left them there, getting better fast. I came on here before they returned home, and I have not heard a word from them since, so have no doubt are all quite well. The boys will be well and profitably occupied for a year to come, at least, as they have agreed to make during that time one hundred and fifty pounds of silk a week; and as they have nothing to do with the buying or selling, they will be on the safe side. Including themselves, there are forty of them in the factory. Mary's George works there, and I believe John also, so that she will be helped along a good deal by it. The satinett *business is quite good too.*

I was very glad to hear from you by the last S. ship, and very much delighted with your letters. They give an idea of things as you go along. Let us hear from you as often as possible, — by every steamer; and I, at least, will send you something as often in return. I don't know that I have any interesting news to tell you now. Allston's painting is said to be a good deal unfinished; one of the principal figures, especially, had just been painted out. It is thought that it will be an interesting picture, particularly to artists, but that it will not please the public generally. I can't find out much about it, and don't know when it is to be exhibited. Brackett has made a pretty good bust of him, partly from a cast he took after his death; on the whole, better than Clevenger's, I think, — partly done from that, though.

Kimberley is getting on pretty well, and has improved a good deal, I think. The weather has been very pleasant all of this month.

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There has been no frost of any consequence until within a few days. The vegetation has looked more like June than September.

I have engaged to engrave two or three plates for Mr. Carey again. One of them is to be from a painting here, and I shall stay here until I get it done, at all events. Don't know as it will be convenient for me to remain here afterwards, as he is anxious to have me in Philadelphia. Will tell you more next time.

You don't say a word about your health, so I suppose you are pretty well, at least; but let us know more particularly. By the way, Dr. Putnam inquired about you, and requested me to tell you to write how you were in health, if you was rid of the pain in the head and eyes, etc. You don't say either what your plans are, whether you intend to return soon or not. But I suppose you will conclude when you get to study. If you stay very long, you will want more money than you took with you. Now, I borrowed about four hundred dollars of you, and I must insist on returning it, — a part of it, at least, I am determined you shall have; there will be no justice without. I have two or three hundred dollars now that I can spare as well as not, and besides, shall earn more immediately. Clark, I believe, has a little more on your account too; so that three, four, or five hundred dollars might be gotten together that belongs to you, and sent at once if you want it, which don't fail to let me know as soon as you have concluded what you will do; and by no means let the want of money shorten your stay.

All of your friends here inquire after you every time I see them. Gould has been here a number of times; says he has made another drawing of the lady, which he wants you to see; she is married now. Don't know as I have more to say, and Kimberley wants a little space to write a postscript; so good-by.

JOHN.

K. is out, and there is not time to wait for him.

BOSTON, Nov. 28 [1843].

DEAR SEP, — I received yours by the last steamer, and was delighted to hear that you had so well recovered your health and spirits. I hope you will take means to keep so in future; you certainly can if you choose.

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I am very much pleased with the drawing you sent; it came without injury.

I have so little to say now of any interest, that I think I should not write if it was not that there is no steamer again until the first of January; for during the winter they do not sail but one a month. You must not forget this, so that we may be sure to hear from you once a month *certain*. I intend to go home to-morrow for Thanksgiving. Electa has written to me to come home; says she will have everything prepared by herself, that she has for some time taken more interest in household affairs, and confesses that she enjoys herself much better, and that her health is uncommonly good. They are all well at home. The boys are still getting on well with the factory, working it night and day, sometimes all night. I had a letter from Charles the other day, rather a business letter; did not say whether he and his folks were well or not. I suppose they are, no doubt. Mr. Perkins came in to-day; said he was one of the appraisers of Mr. Allston's property, and had just been to attend to it; says there is a great many sketches in various states of finish, principally in outlines, some of them very beautiful. They had not concluded what to do with them. The great picture, he says, is in so unfinished a state that it will hardly do for public exhibition. It seems that it was entirely finished a good many years ago, but that he thought the point of sight too low, and determined to alter it, and in doing it he was obliged to repaint almost the whole of it, especially the foreground, which is now, Mr. P. says, in a very bad condition. Some parts are blank, others just begun, others nearly or quite finished again. "Some grand things in it, though," he says. What a pity he should have attempted to alter it!

I want you to look at Raphael's pictures and see if you think each figure or head was from an individual model, — of course well chosen and with appropriate action and expression, but otherwise a good imitation of a particular model.

I have written a long letter, but, as I said, should not have written but that it is the only chance for a month.

A great many people inquire after you, and expect me to send you their respects, etc.

Be sure and write every chance. JOHN.

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BOSTON, Jan. 7.

DEAR MOTHER, —. . . John has gone to Lancaster; went yesterday morning; thinks of staying two months or more. He has more than he can do himself, and has gone there to get assistance. He will visit Boston once in two or three weeks. . . .

Your affectionate son, S. W.

I learn nothing more of this visit to Lancaster.

NEW YORK, June 2 [1845 or 1846].

DEAR RUSH, — I went to Boston last Saturday night and back Tuesday morning. Found Seth very well, better than I expected, and getting on famously with his work. He has done some most excellent things, — better than I thought he could do. There has never been anything of the kind done as well, — at least in this country. His list of engagements increase faster than he can dispose of them; says that when his health is as good as at present he can earn about ten dollars a day. He tells me that he had wished often that you were with him, and that he was on the point of writing to you about it. There are a great many things in which you could assist him more than enough to pay your expenses, I have no doubt. Besides, you would have the best chance to learn to do something yourself. I told him I would write you about it. If you are not very profitably or pleasantly occupied, you had better go to Boston as soon as you can conveniently leave. Among other things, Seth said he wanted you to collect and take care of his money.

Seth told me that he sent one hundred and eighty-eight dollars to Mother the other day, and said he intended some of it for you and Frank if Mother did not want to use it all immediately. There is some repairing of the old house and barn that ought to be done.

I hope to get through here this week, but am afraid I shall not until the last of next.

Ward wrote you some time ago to send him a sample of your silk, and he has not yet received it.

Let me hear from you soon. JOHN.

His brother Rush, here referred to, at one time intended applying himself to art, for which he had both taste and

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talent; but he became interested in the silk manufacture, and devoted his life to that.

PHILADELPHIA, March 25 [1845 or 1846.]

DEAR SEP, — Thinking you might be at home when Rush arrives, I will write a word. I am sorry you could not send the drawing of the little girl, for I am very anxious to get something of yours to engrave, and so is Mr. Carey. When I told him you could not send the one you proposed, he desired me to write and ask if you would make one expressly for him, — either a head of a girl or boy, as you choose, — and he will pay your price for it. There will be no necessity, of course, that it should be a likeness. You can idealize as much as you please. Let me know soon if you will try to do it.

I have not time now to say more, but that I am very glad to hear that you are in so good health and getting on so well. Don't work too hard, — that 's all. I am sorry you can't come on here, but hope you will be able to get here before summer. Rush can tell you all the rest, if you should see him; if not, I will merely say that all the sick ones in Ward's family are getting better.

Let me hear from you very soon. JOHN.

While residing in Philadelphia, either permanently or in occasional visits, Mr. Cheney engraved Sully's graceful heads of women and children, which have become favorites in many a household. As this excellent artist was more noted for sweetness and beauty than strength, he lost little in this reproduction in smaller size, and his works are far better known in the engravings than in the originals. Mr. Cheney also engraved portraits of many of the prominent literary men and women of the day, including Judge Story, Dr. Channing, Bryant, Longfellow, Halleck, Daniel Webster, N. P. Willis, Miss Eliza Leslie, Mrs. Sigourney, Mrs. Lewis, and some prominent merchants, as P. T. Jackson and Joshua Bates. He considered his engraving of Stuart's portrait of Martha Washington his best work.

Bank-note engraving was then receiving great attention,

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and he made several pictures for the American Bank-note Company. Most of his work for that company was done in Boston. Among the most pleasing of the bank-note subjects is a head adapted from a fac-simile of a drawing of Leonardo da Vinci, made American by a band of stars about the brow.

Mr. Cheney always held intimate and cordial relations with other engravers, some of whom occasionally worked on the background or other mechanical parts of his plates when he was very busy. Among his highly-prized friends were Crossman, Cushman, Pease, Andrews, Kimberley, Schoff, and Hartwell. Those who had become reduced by poverty found him a constant benefactor in their old age.

The date of the following letter is uncertain, but it seems too characteristic to be omitted: —

BOSTON, March 18, 1842 (?)
Saturday night.

DEAR MOTHER, —I have just received your letter, and am very sorry to hear that Electa is so ill. I don't think there is any reason to be alarmed. As you say she is using bark and laudanum, I suppose she has no fever, as I believe it would not be well in that case to take such medicine.

The emetic, I dare say, was useful. I recollect being myself much benefited by one prescribed by Dr. Doane in a similar case. But the sulphate of copper I think of doubtful use, and I would not take it, at least unless it was advised by some other physician. It appears to me that it will be as well not to take much medicine of any kind, but trust to the more natural remedies, and time.

Seth left for home yesterday morning, and I hope he has got there before now, though I think he must have had some trouble from the snow-storm. I am glad that he has gone at this time, as he can advise you what is best to do in Electa's case, — better than I could, I think.

Tell Seth he had better not hurry back; but let me hear again immediately how Electa is, as I shall be concerned to know.

I have heard to-day that George Wells died night before last.

JOHN.

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This account of his principal period of work as an engraver seems very meagre, but it has proved very difficult to get accurate accounts of his work. His letters seldom give the date of the year, and his old friends are unable to give statements of events whose importance did not impress them at the time.

During the early part of his life he worked in lithography, and was at Pendleton's establishment. I think he worked for a time with his brother Seth in a studio in Cornhill. His brother says he sometimes worked on copper. He worked only a week or two in the building 5½ Tremont Row, then occupied by Southworth & Hawes, and still held by Mr. Hawes, and later a few doors beyond, where William Page had also a studio. Here I first met him, when he was engaged in engraving the beautiful girlish head by Malbone, a friend having taken me to see the picture. This may have been in 1843 or 1844, certainly before 1845.

A friend says that Mr. Cheney once told him that he never made more than five hundred dollars a year by engraving; but I think this is a mistake. A few items in some accounts with Carey & Hart will show what prices he received from those publishers. One of his friends thinks that he ordinarily took about two months to engrave a head.

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 20, 1839.

Aug. 19.	By bill engraving Isabella	$325.00
	,, ,, Titlepage	150.00
	,, ,, Childhood	325.00
		$800.00

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 23, 1841.

	By engraving Country Girl and Gypsy	$500.00

Aug. 1, 1841.

Jan. 23.	By engraving Titlepage for "Gift," 1842 .	$150.00
July 28.	,, Dulcinea	250.00
		$400.00

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Oct. 19, 1842.

Oct. 18. By eight steel engravings for the "Gift," 1843	$2,000.00
By four vignettes for Cowper's "Task," $50 each .	200.00
	$2,200.00

In 1848 John Cheney, in connection with his brother, made the precious reproduction of Allston's sketches.

Mr. Dexter, in his article on the Art of Boston (Memorial History, Vol. IV), says of these sketches: "They give in some respects a higher idea of the artist than the paintings themselves." Of the engravers he says: "In Boston, the Brothers Cheney are almost the only names of importance in the past." The Allston work "was labor of love with the original projector and the artists. . . . The result was a volume of perfect execution."[1] This was the last engraving of importance, I think the very last, done by either of the brothers.

The money which Mr. Cheney had placed in the silk mill had been used to so good advantage that work was no longer a necessity, and he gave up engraving, which had always seemed to him a tedious and mechanical process. He always held up a severe standard of excellence for himself as well as others, and he felt very keenly the defects of his own early training. He once said to Kimberley, "Nobody ought to engrave who does n't know how to draw; and if he can draw he is a fool to engrave." He was never satisfied with his own drawing, and late in life spent much time in drawing from casts for improvement. He was very much interested in his brother Seth's work. Throughout his letters the recognition of his brother's talent and his wholly unselfish delight in it is evident. He often assisted Seth in his work, both directly and by his criticisms and suggestions. He spent the winter of

[1] For fuller account of this work see Memoir of Seth W. Cheney, p. 99.

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1853–54 in his brother's home in Pinckney Street, and worked with him in the large studio in Channing Street.[1] He was unwilling to talk about his engravings, and said he tried to forget all about them, they were so worthless.

His work was considered the best of American engraving in his own day, and is still very highly prized by connoisseurs. There is in it a clearness and brilliancy of execution and a boldness and freedom of line which connoisseurs recognize as distinguishing it from that of other American engravers of the period.

About 1853 he began making drawings from Retsch's copy of the Dresden Madonna.[2] One of these was of the same size as the painting, and like that contained only the upper part of the figures of the Madonna and Child, while the other carried out the whole of their figures from the engravings. His first drawing is in the possession of Mrs. J. M. Forbes. He repeated this drawing two or three times. A photograph of it was very extensively sold, as photographers had not then succeeded in copying the original. One copy, which he made for his sister, was boxed up for several years, and only opened after his death.

The loss of his brother Seth in 1856 was an irreparable one, and almost ended John's artistic career. They had struggled and worked together from youth, and while often indulging in those sharp discussions which only those whose love is founded upon an imperishable basis dare to enter upon, they lived in such harmony that it is almost impossible to separate them in thought.

On his return from Europe in 1855 Seth had built a small studio on the homestead grounds. It was a simple wooden building containing only one large room, in which were placed the Milo Venus and other casts brought from Europe, with

[1] Memoir, p. 110. [2] In the Art Museum.

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various engravings and pictures belonging to the brothers, and a few of Seth's unfinished pictures. This was John's favorite retreat for the rest of his life. Here he drew his Madonna picture and made such studies as he was interested in. He often gave it up to those of the family who wished to use it, but it was always considered his especial domain. It was on the bank of the brook which ran through the old place and had long supplied power for various industries, and near a majestic oak under which many generations had played. Sometimes it was fragrant with the pears and grapes stored in it for a season. Even in winter he built his own fire, and sat here many hours in solitude, always locking the door so that he would not be surprised in his work. His love of reading supplied occupation and enjoyment for his solitary hours. Although he took no active part in politics, he was interested in all the affairs of the country and in all social and moral questions. He dearly loved an argument. When regular Sunday meetings were held in the hall, so that various clergymen spent the Sundays with the family, he enjoyed their society very much, freely discussing religious and moral questions with them. He could "be angry and sin not;" for although he often got excited in talking, the difference of opinion left no trace of unkindness or malice in his heart. The following letter gives a good idea of his varied interests: —

MANCHESTER, August [1853].
Sunday night.

DEAR SEP, — Got yours yesterday; I ought to have written you before, soon after we got home, but delayed it as usual, or worse than ever. You heard, of course, of our getting safely home. Electa went a day or two after to New York, but came again a week ago to-day, in the boat with Mary and the children. . . .

To-day we had a real old time at Willis Falls; carried up our luncheon, and ate it under the fall with a real satisfaction. . . .

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Mother is quite as well as she has been any time this summer; rather better if anything. We have heard from Charles and Rush; their letters were written and sent before they had landed. They had a very good time, — seasick only a couple of days; shall hear again in about a week. They have had good news at the mill from China, — much better than they expected.

I have not much to say for myself; have been trying to draw some; have got the head of Mrs. Goodwin so that they are pleased with it.

I intended to have fixed the outlet to the pond, but it has rained so much, and made the water so high, that it could not be done very well; so that is yet to be done.

It is very possible I may go to Boston and to Gloucester while you are there; besides, I should like to see Perkins before he leaves. I suppose you heard that Kimberley and wife had been here; they left a week ago Saturday. You have seen Miss Hunt[1] since she was here. We missed her amazingly; she has good-humored force enough to change the character of a whole town for the better. We were all delighted with her, — even Aunt Mary.

Sorry you have headache; if you think sea-shore causes it, you ought to leave. . . . Remember me to Ednah. JOHN.

In 1862 he had a severe fever, which the family thought was brought on by sitting in his cold greenhouse, or grapery, in which he was then much interested. He was very ill; but the fever left no traces, unless in some weakness of the legs and feet, which he did not get entirely over.

John Cheney was quite fond of travelling, and was always glad when he could escort some one of the family on a desired journey. He liked to have some motive stronger than his own pleasure to induce him to go. Beside his early visit to Europe, and his trips to the White Mountains, to the Delaware Water Gap, and other places nearer home, he went in 1837 to the upper Mississippi with his brother Seth.[2] In 1854 he went again to Europe[3] with his brother and sister and others. He left the party, and went with his nephews

[1] Harriot K. Hunt, M.D. [2] See Memoir, p. 25. [3] Ibid., p. 119

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to Italy. He spent the winter of 1872–73 in California with his brother Rush. He often took his nieces on short trips to the sea-shore or mountains. In 1882 he again went out to California with his niece's husband, Mr. Farley, to join his brother's family at Santa Barbara. He went with them to Southern California, San Francisco, the Geysers, the Yosemite Valley, Salt Lake City, etc. He enjoyed the scenery very much; but the journey was saddened by anxiety for his brother Rush, whose death hastened his return in June. He always longed for a warm and fruitful climate, and his love for California led him to buy a tract of land in San Bernardino County even as late as 1884. He was not able to develop it, and it has been sold since his death.

Mr. Cheney held extreme radical views both in religion and politics, even to the point of wishing to abolish the Presidency. He took no active part in carrying out his views, however. He was an earnest opponent of slavery, and took a warm interest in the war. He always advocated temperance both in eating and drinking, but was not a teetotaller. His greatest indulgence was in tea-drinking, but he would never confess that he was dependent upon his cup of tea. He did not use tobacco at all. He was careful in his dress, and all his personal habits gave an impression of health and purity. He was not especially fond of animals, and had no pets. He usually preferred walking to riding, but was fond of horseback riding, although he would not often indulge in the expense of it. When working hard in Philadelphia he was accustomed to take long walks at night all over the city. If he had headache he walked until it was gone. Sunday evenings he attended the church of Rev. Dr. Furness, for whom he always felt a great regard.

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IV.

AUTUMN OF LIFE.

JOHN'S thirty years of life after Seth's death brought him into many kindly and pleasant relations, especially with the nephews and nieces who grew up about him, and who often looked to him for sympathy, advice, and help, having less fear of him than his own generation. For, indeed, like one of the sound crisp apples that he loved so much, he grew mellow and sweet even after he had fully ripened to maturity.

His love of Nature was a never-failing source of interest and happiness, and he was a most interesting companion in a rural walk. His observation was keen and close, his memory good, and he had lived near to Nature all his life. He sought for the reason of everything, and often made the processes of growth and life very vivid and real. I remember a mother whose children were delicate in their early life, who was much comforted by his telling her that he had often observed plants which seemed very slender and sickly for a year or two, develop by good care into strong and healthy ones.

He loved trees as he did his friends. A majestic oak whose growth he had watched from boyhood stood near the mill. In order to enlarge the mill it became necessary to cut down this tree, to the great regret of all the family and neighborhood. No plan could be devised to save it, except at the cost of thousands of dollars. John was grieved to the

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heart, and used every argument and entreaty to preserve it. He one day went into Hartford to see his brother Charles and try to persuade him to make one more effort to "spare that tree." On his return it was already prone on the ground. His remonstrances are said to have caused so much feeling in the neighborhood that one woman forbade her husband to touch the rope which let it down safely. The tree was found not to be a simple trunk, but a collection of suckers bound together by new wood and bark.

Mr. Cheney lacked the habit and necessity of putting his theories to the test, and therefore much which would have been of value if fully thought out, and placed in its proper relations to other truths, was held in a miscellaneous collection of observations and reflections, which were stimulating and suggestive to others, but not thoroughly reliable and useful.

A mind so vigorous and intellectual could not have been hurt by the severest scholastic discipline, and might have achieved more definite results with a more complete command of its instruments. But he made on all who knew him a strong mark, never to be forgotten, of strength and tenderness, intellectual force, love of beauty, and loyalty to truth. One cannot conceive of his being even tempted to untruth. His simple faith was shown in this, — the truth was inevitable.

He had lost somewhat of his vigor in 1884, and suffered from swollen feet and difficulty in walking; but it was not until December that he was seriously ill.

He had the habit of going to the studio to draw or look over his engravings, and always kindled his fire himself; he would not allow any one else to do it for him. One very cold day he went there as usual, kindled the fire, and sat down by it. He probably fell asleep, as he did very

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often; the fire went out, and he was thoroughly chilled; fever came on, and he was confined to his bed for many weeks. A want of vital power was evident when the fever abated. He slept a great deal, and only very slowly regained either the desire or power of activity. He did, however, gain strength enough to ride out during the early summer, and even to walk once or twice with much help; but it was evident that the reservoir was nearly exhausted. During the hot weather of July he drooped so much that he felt a longing for the sea air, and it was thought advisable to take him to Watch Hill. He bore the journey well, but gained nothing from the change. He became very lethargic, and was brought back to Manchester. He gradually faded away, sleeping most of the time, — apparently conscious of those around him, but unable to talk. He was evidently aware of the approach of death, and met the great change with simple acceptance. He died Aug. 20, 1885, at half-past two in the afternoon. He was buried in the old cemetery, beside his father and mother. He died in the same house, almost on the same spot, where he was born, and during his long life he had never for any length of time called any other place home. He loved it with the tenacity of his strong nature.

It is very difficult to describe a character so unique and so complicated. John Cheney was undoubtedly of the old Puritan stock, yet he was more of a Stoic than a Christian in his opinions. He never had any regular intellectual training, but was a close observer and an original and deep thinker. His views were not tested either by careful expression or by action in connection with others, or by sustained and responsible controversy. He often followed out a chain of argument in his own mind without taking cognizance of facts

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which would refute or discredit his views, or even being aware how fully the ground had been gone over by others.

From his youth upward he was very fond of reading, and delighted in the writings of the material school, and especially in treatises on Hygiene. His mind was very much influenced by the philosophy of the latter half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, sympathizing with Rousseau in his belief in Nature, and his admiration of the virtues and privileges of the savage state. He was apt to trace all derangement in health to excess in eating, and to advocate the extreme of simplicity and abstemiousness in diet; yet he had a very sensitive taste, and was fond of delicacy and variety in his food. But he was no gourmand; his enjoyment seemed really a matter of taste, an analysis of flavors, an artistic delight rather than sensuous pleasure. He was interested in fruit culture, and delighted to buy choice fruit to bring home. He would cut a pear or apple into many parts and distribute to each of the family for their opinion on its flavor and quality. Even in 1883 he started peach-orchards in Manchester.

Naturally careful of details, and obliged to practise economy in his youth, he shrank from lavish expenditure. He never could reconcile himself to the idea that the money gained by his stock in the mills really belonged to him, because he had not worked directly for it. He would not yield up a cent which was due to him, and would haggle long with a fruit-merchant about his purchases. On one occasion a stall-keeper had peaches at fifteen cents a quart, or two quarts for twenty-five cents. John proposed to buy three quarts, and the stall-keeper charged him forty cents; but John maintained that he had a right to the reduction on the third quart as well as on the second. This was too deep for the stall-keeper, who could not or would not understand it,

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and John walked away without his peaches. But he was very generous in large things. When poor and struggling, he would deny himself handsome clothing that he might lend to other artists; and many a poor photographer or engraver was assisted with nominal loans which became gifts in the end. His theories of severe economy, of rigid simplicity in dress, food, and manner of life, were at variance with his tastes, which were delicate, and appreciative of beauty and refinement, and with his kindness of disposition, which led him to gratify others in the very things he argued against. He was very fond of music, but never played any instrument. He was always battling with himself, unwilling to yield to his strong affections and tender feelings. Dominated by the sensational philosophy, he would not accept the faith which he did not willingly abandon, and perhaps he sometimes strenuously argued against immortality in the hope of eliciting a strength of reply which would enforce conviction. He had great delight in modern science, and Herbert Spencer probably satisfied his thought better than any other writer; but always an individualist, a seeker, he united with no school or church, but remained strong in his own personality, — himself and no other.

A stern integrity of character was the basis of his firm and noble nature and many of his peculiarities. He could not compromise, or yield what seemed to him true and right. His love was stern and strong as his justice, and like that never broke down under pressure. In the time of deepest need one was surest of his sympathy and help; but in slight matters he was often rough and harsh in his expression, even to those he loved most. Grief acted upon him with terrible power; and when death took from him those whom he loved, the recoil of sorrow almost wore the guise of anger. He impressed many with something like a paralysis of fear;

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and yet those who feared him most would go to him in the hour of deep trouble, sure of sympathy. He was a kind and indefatigable nurse; and believing much in the good effects of rubbing, he would seem to give out his own vitality to restore the sufferer. He was always very attractive to other men. James Russell Lowell said once: "He was the most perfect gentleman I ever knew." In his old age he lived in the homestead where he was born, occupying himself with the care of the grounds and pruning trees, with reading, and with frequent visits to his relatives in the town, his sister at Lenox, his niece in New York, and other friends. His health was remarkably good; at eighty-one he walked with the young people, and although less vigorous than formerly, still showed none of the infirmities of age, except a slight deafness.

The reality and strength of his nature made a profound impression, and his life will always remain a power and a blessing to all who knew him. One of the family wrote of him in 1866: —

> "How like a sound ripe russet apple John is, as he grows older, — more beautiful and sweet and precious than ever. I think there is one angel in heaven who rejoices to see his path so strewing and strewn with loving-kindness."

Mr. Cheney never married. He was devoted to his own family, and took the keenest interest in the health and welfare of all the younger members. He always encouraged others to matrimony. He was social in his life, and had no dislike to the society of women, whom he always treated with kindness and respect. During the last summer of his active life he was constantly seen carrying his tall ladder from tree to tree, which he pruned with his own hands. He accepted assistance unwillingly, even in putting on his coat.

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So he walked among the gathering generations, with the crown of white hairs about his head and face, growing more beautiful even in person as the ripened beauty of soul shone through his face. He seemed a link with all the past which had borne away so many dear and loved ones; and yet his heart was in full sympathy with the youngest *grandchildren* and *great-grandchildren*, with whom he gathered shagbarks and chestnuts on the hillside as eagerly as if he were a boy with them still. The whole family looked up to him as their patriarch, with affection and confidence.

John Cheney was tall and well-proportioned, and his features were regular, strong, manly, and expressive. His complexion was rather fair, his hair brown, and his eyes blue. A lady who knew him in youth remembers him as very fine-looking, saying little, but very stimulating and suggestive in conversation. There are one or two slight sketches of him in youth by his brother Seth, and a very interesting miniature in water-colors, painted probably in 1834 by his friend Dubourjal. William Page painted a portrait of him about the year 1845, which is spoken of by Seth and others as very good; but I have not been able to learn of its existence now.

Seth painted a portrait in oils in Paris in 1854, which represents him in middle life. He also made a medallion of him in plaster. There are many good photographs by Southworth, Hawes, and others, and one by his nephews Paul Cheney and William Platt after he was enfeebled by his last illness.

The portrait in this book is reproduced by the photogravure process (in which he took great interest) from a drawing by his niece, Mrs. Harriet E. Cheney.

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NOTE.

Mr. S. R. Koehler, Curator of the Print Department at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and of the Section of Graphic Arts, U. S..National Museum (Smithsonian Institution), Washington, is engaged in the preparation of a catalogue of Mr. John Cheney's engravings and lithographs, and of those of his brother, Mr. Seth W. Cheney. When it is ready, it will be printed uniform with this Memoir, so that it can be bound with it if desired.

Any information concerning their works, such as date or subject of their prints, present whereabouts of the originals from which they were executed, date and place of publication, with titles of books, etc., in which they appeared, names and addresses of private persons or public institutions having Cheney collections, and all other details bearing upon the subject, will be gratefully received either by Mr. S. R. Koehler, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Mass.; or by Mrs. Ednah D. Cheney, Jamaica Plain, Mass.

Mr. Charles Henry Hart, of Philadelphia, the biographer of A. B. Durand, and a well-known collector and critic of American engravings, has sent me the accompanying estimate of Mr. Cheney's work: —

I esteem Mr. Cheney as the second engraver this country has produced; A. B. Durand always being first, and far ahead of any one else. Mr. Cheney's chief merit as an artist was the faithfulness with which he rendered in black and white the tender gradations

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of color in the original picture, preserving the values and unity throughout. He sometimes improved upon the picture even when that picture was a masterpiece, as is the case with his portrait of Martha Washington, after Stuart's Athenæum head, certainly his choicest work. He used the graver with a delicacy which is very remarkable when we bear in mind the substance upon which the work is done and the instrument with which it is done, — both the hardest steel. A number of his works are copies from other prints, but his best plates are those where he had the original picture to follow. If I was asked to say which were his best works, I would without hesitation name "Martha Washington" and "Mrs. Blodget," after Stuart, and "Egeria" and "Annette," after Malbone. These four plates are engraved with exquisite taste and artistic feeling. I am sorry that my information is so meagre, for I should be extremely glad if I were able to furnish you with material that would increase the interest and value of your Memoir.

Yours truly,

CHARLES HENRY HART.

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